

The Year of Wonders: England 1665 - 1666

The time period in which our novel takes place is referred to as **Restoration England** referring to the return of England as a monarchy. Charles II had his throne, crown, government **restored**.

To appreciate The Year of Wonders, let's first look at government, religion, and superstition of the times.

Government: Chronology of Monarchs



Elizabeth I

1533-1603



James I

1603-1625



Charles I

1625-1649

Charles I

Although a monarchy, England has had a parliament since the days of William the Conqueror. Early kings had royal councils of land owners or lords and officials of the church. This royal council eventually developed into two houses:

➤ **House of Lords**

➤ **House of Commons**

Charles I, a believer in the Divine Right of Kings, quarreled with parliament and dissolved it for 11 years, a dispute which began another civil war in England.

The Execution of Charles I



The execution of Charles I is a truly remarkable event in British history. No British monarch has been executed by will of the 'people' before or since. Charles' execution represented more than just the death of an individual, it also symbolised the death of the divine right theory, and the birth of modern constitutional politics.

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Oliver Cromwell



During this time period England was no longer a monarchy. It was called the English Republic or the Commonwealth of England. Oliver Cromwell, who led the revolt against King Charles I, was in charge.

He took the title of Lord Protector and ruled for approximately 5 years.

Cromwell was a Puritan.

The Restoration



In 1660 a new Parliament invited Charles II, the son of Charles I to return from exile in France. The monarchy was thus restored in England.

Note the lavishness of his clothing, especially the color, especially in contrast to Puritan sobriety.

Religion: Puritan England

Elizabeth I established the Church of England or Anglican Church. Her successor, James I was also Protestant, a Presbyterian. During Charles I's reign, the Puritan church became powerful.

You will remember Puritanism from our study of The Crucible. It was a strict religion both in worship and in human behavior.

Puritan Meeting House vs. Anglican Church



Puritan

Puritans wanted to purify every aspect of the church, even architecture.



Anglican

Puritan life and worship



During Cromwell's Puritan-dominated leadership, England's theaters were closed and most forms of recreation were suspended. Sunday was a day of prayer when even walking for pleasure was suspended.

Their goal was to purify both the worship service and the place of worship. They believed the Anglican worship service and church was too closely related to Catholicism. Their goal was to keep England protestant.

A strict outlook



Remember John Proctor's criticism of Rev. Parris' use of golden candlesticks in the Salem church? Puritans wanted none of the architecture, stained glass, or icons of the Anglican church. In most churches they were seated on benches with no regard for social standing. They had no priests or church hierarchy.

Puritanism: God and Man

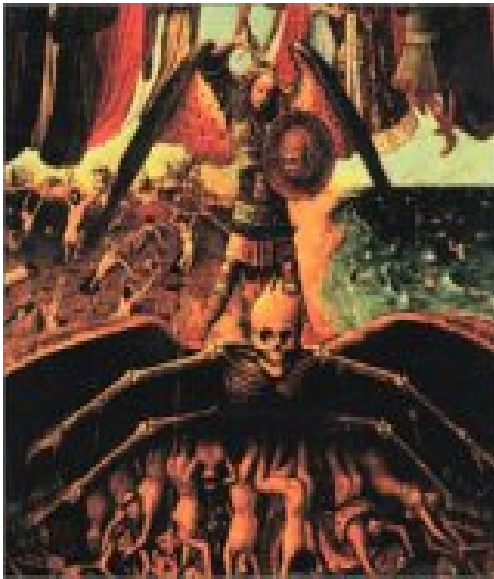
Do you remember the 5 tenants of Calvinism from English 2? Most of us agreed that we would not want to worship the Puritan God.

The Puritans believed in the Calvinist philosophy of

- Total depravity: we are all sinners from birth.
- Limited atonement: Jesus did not die to save us all.
- Predestination: we are born either elect or unregenerate. The elect will receive a heavenly reward while the unregenerate will go to hell.

Look for similar ideas in reading The Year of Wonders.

An angry God



Do you remember Jonathan Edward's famous sermon, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God"? Our sin dangles each like a spider over a pit of hell.

The Puritans believed that the Bible is God's truth and that he sends signs

especially through nature: drought, floods, pestilence or disease. Could the 1665-66 plague be a sign of God's displeasure with England?

Religion: Church of England



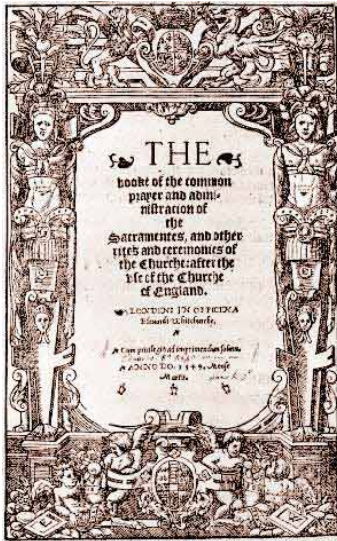
THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Current logo

Christianity was introduced to the British Isles by the Romans and took the place of Celtic animism as a religious belief. Until the Reformation period, the Church of England recognized the authority of the Pope.

The Church of England broke with Rome in the 16th Century when the Catholic church refused to annul the marriage of King Henry VIII to Catherine of Aragon.

Religion: A troubled history



Book of Common Prayer

Although Henry VIII broke with the Catholic Church, our look at the Renaissance showed us that the many lost their lives over their choice of faith. Even when the Church of England or Anglican church seemed to have finally replaced the Catholic church, religion was still an unsettling topic.

When Charles I was deposed, the Puritan faith was the “official” religion of England. This protestant group banned the Book of Common Prayer, the primary guide for worship of the Church of England. First published in 1549, it is know for the beauty of its language. Anna Frith is comforted by this beauty.

Superstition: Witchcraft



From 1542 to 1735 witchcraft in England was a statutory crime punished by death. It was defined as a pact with the devil to do harm through black magic. In actuality witchcraft was often used as an explanation for the harsh realities of the world in which these people lived. One of these realities was disease.

How does the village of Eyam react to witchcraft and black magic?

17th Century: The Beginning of the Modern World?

In 1662 Charles II established The Royal Society of London for the improvement of Natural Knowledge, known simply as the Royal Society. It claims to be the oldest formal organization for the scientific method. Its motto “Nullius in Verbo” or “On the words of no one” suggest the scientific outlook of seeking truth through experimentation rather than citing an authority or deductive logic vs. divine providence.



The Royal Society in London

Look for this questioning attitude in The Year of Wonders.

Year of Wonders

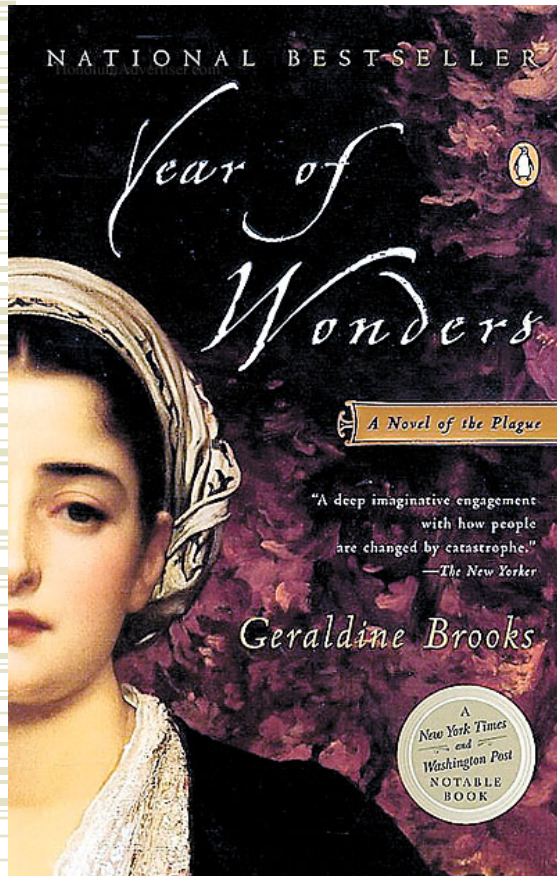


Boundary Stone Eyam Village

When we think of the plague, we think of the Middle Ages when in Medieval Europe over 1/3 of the population died.

However, England suffered a second epidemic of the Black Death or Bubonic plague in the spring and summer of 1665. The outbreak in London killed thousands and filled the huge pits dug as mass graves for the victims. The Great Fire of London which destroyed the center of the city also killed off most of the rats who carried the plague bacteria.

Fiction Based on Fact



Geraldine Brooks researched this plague for her novel which is fiction based on fact. You will be impressed with her description of life during this time, especially for women.

This village, led by the novel's rector Michael Mompellion, actually did quarantine itself, losing 260 of the original 350 yeoman, miners, and artisan craftsmen and their families who lived there.

Mompesson vs. Mompellion

Michael Mompellion is based on William Mompesson. Mompesson came to Eyam in April of 1664 with his wife Katharine and 2 children. When the plague broke out, they sent their children to relatives. When the squire and other wealthy residents left, Mompesson and a previous rector Thomas Stanley provided village leadership. Katharine died in August of 1666.



Katherine Mompesson's Grave

Bradshaw vs. Bradford



The Bradfords are the wealthy family who flee Eyam to escape the plague. They are most like based on a similar family, the Bradshaws, who left the village. The picture shows the remains of Bradford hall.

George Viccars

The factual George Viccars may have been a traveling tailor, an artisan who worked in the village. He had ordered cloth from London for his business. The parish records indicate that he lived with Jonathan and Edward Cooper, sons of a lead-miner. The cottage you see has been altered since 1666. The only original part may be the kitchen.



Anna Frith



The lively, strong willed, and thoughtful protagonist of Year of Wonders is fictional, created entirely by Geraldine Brooks.

Further Factual References: Epilogue



Avicenna wrote
Canon of Medicine



Coat of Arms
Oran, Algeria



Andalus in southern Spain where Christian, Jews, and Muslims lived in peace and tolerance from the 8th-15th centuries. Known as a creative center in the Western World. Musalmans would resettle on North African coast: Algeria.

Visiting Eyam today



Pictured is Cucklett delf, the wooded valley where Michael Mompellion held church services. On the last Sunday of August, a service is still held here to commemorate the year of wonders.



Anteros: God of requited love

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Flagellants